

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Dear Committee Members,

Our family is making this contribution in support of all homeschoolers in Australia. Our family never attended a school for their education. We never used the National Curriculum to sustain their high quality education. My husband and I spent well over 20 years educating our children. We even participated in NAPLAN and they were assessed as being well above the average for their year level.

Our children are well respected members of the community. Some have completed tertiary studies, some are still studying at a tertiary level and one was offered a place at a tertiary institution but declined to pursue a career as a Mechanic. Two of them run their own profitable businesses. One is a respected instrumental teacher and employed by the Queensland Education Department.

I am currently an advocate for Homeschoolers and am involved with the Home Education Association. I am one of the main contact people for Queensland homeschoolers, in our organisation, and I also answer calls on our national helpline. I have been privileged to hear many reasons surrounding registration into homeschooling and assisted many families in the registration and reporting processes.

Here are a number of reasons that are regularly heard on Helpline and most can be read in the report freely available on the Queensland Education Department website.

- Parents have had enough of the education system that disregards their child's needs
 - Mental
 - Gender issues - both for and against the use of this political arena.
 - Disability
 - Bullying
 - Academic challenges - excelling or regressing
 - Medical
- Parents are wanting their children to have a loving and caring environment
- Parents want to see their child thriving without peer pressure
- Parents don't want to see the school being used as a political arena for anything.

It grieves me everytime I hear a parent in such distress over their child's anguish of not wanting to go to school, mainly for reasons already mentioned. They often state that Homeschooling is all they have left to try.

Some points to consider about the tabled bill that will discriminate and affect many new to and continuing homeschooling families.

1. Removal s207 Provisional registration. This is one of two methods to register for Homeschooling. It is a 60 days registration process used by less than 6% of initial registering parents. This registration process is most commonly used by parents who

need to remove their child from a dangerous or traumatic situation at a school. Some of which are listed above. Other parents need time to think about how to help their mentally unstable and traumatised child. For some, their medical well being could not be catered for and their educational standard was just not able to be met. Children need this time to heal and settle into a routine. Learning to heal is part of homeschooling. It's called health and wellbeing. It gives the parent and child time to decide whether homeschooling or other options of public or private schooling or if even distance education are possible.

2. s208 is the formal route of registration which requires a parent to submit a declaration form, birth certificate and an educational summary; some cases require other court or medical documents. When HEU doesn't receive one of these documents they will issue a s210. This option is being poorly used by families because they do not know they can use s207.
3. Removal of s210 will render a parent unable to be registered for failure to submit but one document in the registration process. Already a daunting task for some, this is completely due to parents not knowing that s207 is an option at a time of great need to exit a 'school failing their child's situation'. Parents will use s208 provisional registration as a quick fix to be legal, when in fact it is the formal procedure when you have everything ready. More than 64% of parents use this method and directly reflects those exiting the school system, then HEU staff must send out Show Cause Notices of s210 to ask for missing documents.
4. It would be better to keep all these in place and make sure that parents needing to take their children out of school know that s207 Provisional Registration is an option, while their child is recovering from their trauma. Parents can then decide how they will educate their child and then proceed to apply formally through s208, if they continue to homeschool and in turn reducing the number of s210 notices issued.
5. ACARA is not something that should be enforced. Some children just do not respond to traditional schooling. Not all children are academically inclined or they have a disability that prevents full implementation of ACARA or any curriculum. Homeschooling parents are well aware of this and will define learning outcomes for their children based upon their learning needs. Some require a great deal of structure with books and experiences to match, while others will place more emphasis on life skills learning and projects. Then there are those who pursue a blend of so many different ways. We are all different, diverse, inclusive and well rounded people who spend a great deal of time in the learning sphere. The love of learning is what a homeschooler is encouraged to achieve and to be involved with peers who think like mindedly.
6. Other states do not mandate ACARA. NSW expects parents to follow the NSW syllabus, as ACARA does not meet their standard of quality. Other states generalise use of the structure of ACARA but do not demand it and accept alternative curriculums. NT leans towards ACARA but will accept alternatives.

Homeschoolers are not isolated individuals. Our learning can be alone or with many in a group. Homeschoolers are encouraged to have social time with peers in groups - sporting, music, drama and many other group activities organised for their social well being and learning outcomes.

I do not approve of the proposed changes being tabled by the recent bill surrounding Education, and in particular Home Education. There are numerous reasons that I found this Bill to be incorrect and not based upon proper consultation and facts.

Respectfully,
Tina Smith